

My fellow Americans, this day has a special meaning for me, for I, too, am a son of the South, the old, segregated South. And those of you who marched 35 years ago set me free, too, on Bloody Sunday, free to know you, to work with you, to love you, to raise my child to celebrate our differences and hallow our common humanity.

I thank you all for what you did here. Thank you, Andy and Jesse and Joe, for the lives you have lived since. Thank you, Coretta, for giving up your beloved husband and the blessings of a normal life. Thank you, Ethel Kennedy, for giving up your beloved husband and the blessings of a normal life.

And thank you, John Lewis, for the beatings you took and the heart you kept wide open. Thank you for walking with the wind, hand in hand with your brothers and sisters, to hold America's trembling house down. Thank you for your vision of the beloved community, an America at peace with itself.

I tell you all, as long as Americans are willing to hold hands, we can walk with any wind; we can cross any bridge. Deep in my heart, I do believe, we shall overcome.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:08 p.m. on the Edmund Pettus Bridge. In his remarks, he referred to Coretta Scott King, widow of Martin Luther King, Jr.; civil rights leader Rev. Jesse Jackson; Rev. Jerome Harris, who gave the invocation; Antar Breaux, member, 21st Youth Leadership Movement, who introduced the President; Rose Sanders, president, National Voting Rights Museum, and wife of State Senator Henry (Hank) Sanders; Joseph Lowrey, former president, Southern Christian Leadership Conference; former United Nations Ambassador Andrew Young; Julian Bond, chair, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; South African Ambassador to the U.S. Sheila Sisulu; Gov. Don Siegelman of Alabama; Mayor Joe T. Smitherman of Selma, AL; Ethel Kennedy, widow of Senator Robert F. Kennedy; and the following participants of the 1965 voting rights march: Hosea Williams, Amelia Boynton Robinson, Marie Foster, Lillie Brown, Earnest Doyle, and Rev. J.D. Hunter.

Statement on Legislation To Award the Congressional Gold Medal to John Cardinal O'Connor

March 5, 2000

The Congressional Gold Medal is the highest civilian honor bestowed by the U.S. Congress. Today I am proud to sign legislation ratifying the decision of the Congress to present this award—the first Gold Medal of the new millennium—to His Eminence John Cardinal O'Connor.

For more than 50 years, Cardinal O'Connor has served the Catholic Church and our Nation with constancy and commitment. From his early days performing parish work in his native Philadelphia, to his long service as a military chaplain in places like Korea and Vietnam, to his 16 years leading the Archdiocese of New York, Cardinal O'Connor's journey of faith has been America's blessing.

Whether it was the soldier on the battlefield or the patient battling AIDS, Cardinal O'Connor has ministered with a gentle spirit and a loving heart. Through it all, he has stood strong as an advocate for the poor, a champion for workers, and an inspiration for millions. He has worked tirelessly to bridge divides between those of different backgrounds and faiths, reminding us that the most important thing we share is our common humanity.

Cardinal O'Connor has always had the courage to speak his mind and act on the firmness of his convictions. In recent months, we have seen his courage on display once more in the face of illness. Today, as our Nation salutes Cardinal O'Connor, we thank him for dedicating his life to lifting the lives of others.

Statement on the Sale of F-16 Aircraft to the United Arab Emirates

March 5, 2000

I welcome the news that the negotiation for the sale of F-16 aircraft to the United